Teacher beliefs about listening in a foreign language

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Abstract

This study investigated, through a questionnaire, the stated beliefs and stated practices of 115 foreign language teachers in England regarding listening pedagogy: whether such beliefs and practices reflect the literature on listening, whether beliefs and stated practices converged, and what factors might underpin them. Responses indicated a mismatch between teachers' stated belief in the importance of teaching learners how to listen more effectively, and the lack of evidence in their stated practice of such teaching, with a focus instead on task completion. Findings are discussed against the accountability agenda of the study's context, and its implications for teacher development highlighted.

Key words: Teacher beliefs; language teaching; second language listening

1. Introduction

The field of language teacher cognition – what Borg and Burns (2008) define as "the study of what teachers know, think, and believe and how these relate to what teachers do" (p.457) - is a growing one, as is indicated by the size of the bibliography on the subject maintained by Simon Borg at the University of Leeds (Borg, 2013). The term 'cognition' thus seems to embrace knowledge, beliefs and conceptualisations, and indeed these four terms are often used interchangeably in the literature (e.g. Gao & Ma, 2011). For that reason, we also use the term 'belief' and 'cognition' in this article interchangeably. Understanding teacher beliefs is important because such beliefs are held to exert a strong influence on how teachers behave in the classroom and vice versa (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 1999). In the area of second language listening, however, there is a marked lack of research into teacher cognition, a gap that the present study seeks to fill.

While there is some debate regarding how beliefs should be defined and operationalized, and how they might differ from knowledge, Barcelos (2003) outlines three approaches adopted by researchers to explore beliefs in second language research (although she does so mainly in relation to student belief studies): the "normative" approach, where the focus is on exploring, often without reference to actual practice and through quantitative approaches such as questionnaires, "preconceived notions, myths, or misconceptions" (Barcelos, 2003, p.11); the "metacognitive" approach, wherein beliefs are viewed as what learners (and by extension, teachers) think and can express about the process of learning and teaching and which tend to be explored through self-report methods; and third, the "contextual" approach, in which teachers' beliefs are held to be influenced more by external factors, to be "explored and interpreted within their context-specific life experiences" (Gao & Ma, 2011, p.329). Arguably, however, there is some benefit from combining these approaches to gain a fuller understanding of how teachers' beliefs relate to, or differ from, what the research literature suggests about the listening process and about how the skill might be most effectively developed, alongside insights into how such beliefs relate to classroom practice, and in turn the extent to which both beliefs and practice might be influenced by the instructional context in which teachers are working.

This combined approach toward the fullest possible picture is especially relevant for a study on beliefs about listening for a number of reasons. First, the paucity of previous studies in this area. Our review of the literature on language teaching cognition did not uncover a single study examining teacher beliefs about listening. The nearest we found was a study conducted by Bekleyen (2009), on anxiety about listening among students training to be language teachers, i.e. the participants were themselves engaged in listening tasks as

learners rather than as teachers. While this study has implications for teaching listening, the student teachers, anxious and lacking confidence in their own listening ability, reported dealing with these issues by simply practising more. Hence one might assume that as teachers they may adopt a 'more practice' approach with their own learners rather than seeking other ways to develop listening skills. The study does not, however, give any more insights into participants' beliefs about listening as teachers. Similarly, other researchers consider such beliefs tangentially. For example, our previous work indicated that teachers find listening difficult to teach, but does so within the context of a study focusing on learners (e.g. Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2011). Likewise, this previous work and our own observations suggest that teachers adopt what Field (2008) has called the "comprehension approach" (p.26) where listening is mainly a test of comprehension, improvement is seen to occur simply through more practice, activities are delivered rather than teaching skills, and where the emphasis is on learners obtaining information and the "correct answer" from passages, i.e. on the "product" of listening rather than on the insights learners' answers might provide into the "process" of listening they adopt (Field, 2008, p.81). This approach may exist in a range of countries and contexts. A very recent study by Siegel (2013) in Japan among university language teachers found a predominance of comprehension-based activities. Goh (2010) likewise argues that "listening instruction in many language courses tends to focus almost exclusively on understanding the content of spoken texts, with little time given to teaching about the process of listening and how to listen" (p.180). Yet the extent to which teachers follow this comprehension approach is far from clear; the same is true for understanding their rationale for following this approach, if they do. In short, little systematically gathered evidence exists regarding how teachers approach listening instruction and how they believe listening should be taught.

The importance of exploring teacher beliefs about listening also relates to what has been the starting point for our previous research into listening: the complex and challenging nature of listening in a second language. This may be particularly the case for unidirectional listening, that is, where the listener has no opportunity to interrupt the speaker, ask for clarification or repetition, such as listening to a radio broadcast. These challenges are also reflected in the fact that, in England at least, the context of the present study, learners find listening one of the most difficult skills in which to make progress within Modern Foreign Language (MFL) study (Graham, 2006). Our previous work within that context also found that even at fairly advanced stages of language learning learners have poorly developed listening strategies (Graham & Macaro, 2008; Graham, Santos, et al., 2011; Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2008) which rarely improve without explicit listening strategy instruction. Official inspections of MFL by OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education, 2011) draw attention to shortcomings in the teaching and learning of listening (as well as in other skill areas), highlighting a lack of use of authentic listening materials, an overreliance on textbook materials, and an under-development of language learning strategies (the latter across all skills). How such teaching approaches are related to teacher beliefs about listening and to contextual features seems worthy of exploration, particularly as a foreground to any attempts to develop listening pedagogy.

This last argument also underpins the decision to seek insights into how teacher beliefs converge with or diverge from the research literature. These two areas are usually termed 'practical' on the one hand (i.e. teacher beliefs or knowledge) and 'formal' (i.e. based on reading and on research) on the other. For example, in their study of teachers' beliefs about

an integrative approach to grammar teaching, Borg and Burns (2008) compare the "formal theory" of research found in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature with the "practical theory" (p.479) of the teachers they studied. 'Practical theory' they define as "teachers' conceptualizations of integration" (p.458), evidence for which they sought through a questionnaire that probed teachers' beliefs and stated practices in grammar teaching, how they reported teaching grammar in an integrative manner, and how they judged the effectiveness of their approach. Finding almost no reference to formal theories of grammar in the questionnaire data they obtained from 176 English language teachers, in spite of the latter's high level of qualifications and the wealth of SLA literature on grammar acquisition, the authors note the "atheoretical nature" (p.479) of teachers' justifications for their grammar practice, arguing that it "raises questions about the reliability of their judgements about its effectiveness" (p.479). While the purpose of the current investigation was not to pass judgement on teachers' beliefs and stated practices in listening, evidence of divergence between teachers' 'practical theory' (how they believe listening should be taught) and 'formal theory' may offer insights into some of the difficulties surrounding learners' listening development outlined above. More importantly, however, an understanding of such divergences seems to be a vital precursor to any changes that one might hope to introduce into teachers' practice. As Breen, Hird, Milton, Oliver, & Thwaite (2001) contend, "innovation in classroom practice (…) has to be accommodated within the teacher's own framework of teaching principles" (pp.471-472).

Other relevant studies of whether and how issues from the research literature find resonance in the principles and practices followed by teachers include one conducted by Andon and Eckerth (2009). This explored teachers' beliefs about task-based language

teaching (TBLT) and the ways in which "published accounts [of TBLT] are reflected in teachers' pedagogic principles" (p.286) within English Language Teaching (ELT). They found that their four case-study teachers were aware of central themes from the TBLT literature and that although their knowledge of this literature was limited to having read a small number of authors' work, some of its principles were reflected in their teaching and discussions of their practice. In reading, Kuzborska (2011) conducted a study of eight teachers at university level in Lithuania, exploring their reading instructional beliefs and practices, as well as how these reflected current research literature on reading. She reports relatively little overlap between teachers' beliefs and practices on the one hand and the issues raised in the research literature on the other, and that her participants saw reading as "a decoding process with a reader decoding words and sentences in a linear fashion merely to obtain 'correct' answers" (p.116). This may correspond to the "comprehension approach" that Field (2008, p.26) sees as dominating the teaching of listening.

Both of these studies determined in advance which areas of formal knowledge it might be most relevant to explore within the context of TBLT and reading respectively. We followed the same approach in the present study, selecting those recent research findings which seemed to have the most direct relevance for instructed high school foreign language learning, i.e. the context in which we were working. These findings outline some of the principles that are likely to contribute to the development of effective listening skills in learners, and may be summarised thus: that effective listening strategies do not necessarily develop on their own (Graham, Santos, et al., 2008, 2011) but are teachable (Vandergrift, 2007), leading to the development of more effective listeners (Graham & Macaro, 2008); that focusing on both linguistic and contextual features, i.e. bottom-up and

top-down approaches, is likely to lead to better comprehension, with flexibility needed depending on the text (Hinkel, 2006; Tsui & Fullilove, 1998); that metacognitive strategies/metacognitive awareness are important for listening development (Graham, Santos, et al., 2008; Vandergrift, 2003), with learner exploration and discussion of listening being helpful (Goh & Taib, 2006; Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010); that processing of larger chunks of language (Vandergrift, 1998) is more effective than focusing on individual words; and that prediction/prelistening activities need to be combined with strategies for verifying predictions (Graham, Santos, & Vanderplank, 2010; Vandergrift, 1999, 2002, 2003). In short, these areas might be considered to be contributors to 'listening effectively' from a 'formal theory' perspective.

At the start of this paper we reiterated the commonly-cited view that teachers' beliefs influence their classroom practice. There is a substantial amount of research, however, that suggests that beliefs and practice do not always correspond. In a review of (mainly doctoral) studies looking at tensions between beliefs and practices, Basturkmen (2012) reports that correspondence between beliefs and practices seems more common among experienced teachers than among novice teachers, although overall more studies show divergence than convergence, with constraints and contextual factors important reasons for this divergence. Teachers may believe that a certain approach is desirable, but the force of contextual demands may be stronger, inhibiting them from implementing the belief in their practice. Another interesting perspective is offered by Speer (2005), writing on research into the beliefs of mathematics teachers, who argues that apparent divergences may result from differences in how researchers and teachers conceptualise the same term and its practical

implementation. This may be true if teachers and researchers conceptualise 'listening effectively' in different ways.

1.1 Context

The above issues were explored in the context of England, where at the time of the reported study foreign language learning was only compulsory between the ages of 11 and 14 (during what is known as 'Key Stage 3'). This context is characterised by poor uptake of languages post-14, within a curriculum often described as results and targets/outcomes focused with a strong culture of accountability regarding learners' attainment (Mitchell, 2010; Reid, Brain, & Comerford Boyes, 2004). Progress and attainment at Key Stage 3 at the time were measured through 'Attainment Targets': benchmark statements or 'Levels' that indicate what a learner should be able to do in each of the four MFL skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. By the end of Key Stage 3, the 'average' to 'good' learner was expected to have reached Level 5 or 6 (roughly equivalent to level A2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - see CILT (n.d)).

For listening, these levels highlight the following:

Level 5

> Pupils show that they understand the main points and opinions in spoken passages made up of familiar material from various contexts, including present and past or future events.

Level 6

> Pupils show that they understand the difference between present, past and future events in a range of spoken material that includes familiar language in less

familiar contexts. They identify and note the main points and specific details.

(QCA, 2007)

Here, although there is mention of understanding 'opinions', the key emphasis is on extracting information (main points, specific details) and operating with familiar language. In addition to these formal assessment criteria, the MFL National Curriculum in force at the time included unassessed expectations regarding the development of learners' comprehension strategies:

Pupils should be able to:

- ...use previous knowledge, context and other clues to work out the meaning of what they hear or read (…)
- listen for gist or detail
- deal with unfamiliar language, unexpected responses and unpredictable situations.

(QCA, 2007)

If no formal assessment of these areas is expected, teachers may be less likely to address them.

2.Methodology and methods

Given the paucity of research into teachers' beliefs about listening, our overall aim as part of a larger study was to explore the nature and extent of the understanding of foreign language listening pedagogy held by MFL teachers in England, how they use listening materials in textbooks, and the nature of those materials. A mixed-method approach was

employed, with a questionnaire at the start of the study, followed by lesson observations of a smaller sample of teachers and post-lesson teacher interviews, alongside a textbook analysis. This range of methods was employed to allow us to gain both a broad insight into beliefs and practices in teaching listening on a fairly large scale, and a more fine-grained view of these issues from a qualitative perspective. Here, we focus on questionnaire data. Like Borg and Burns (2008), we recognise that questionnaires "cannot measure action but only respondents' reports of their actions" (p. 459) and that respondents may give what they feel is the expected response. Thus the present study reports on stated beliefs and stated practices, rather than on actual practices. At the same time, we would argue that stated practices are not totally divorced from actual practices – the anonymity questionnaires provide may arguably lead to more accurate insights into practice than observation, in which the observed may adopt approaches that are not normally part of their repertoire, to make a good impression on the observer. Additionally, questionnaires can give some insights into the practices of a much wider range of teachers' work than would be possible from observations alone. Also, certain measures can be taken to maximise the validity of what respondents report, as discussed in 2.2. The data here are thus presented to answer the following main research question: 'To what extent do teachers' stated beliefs and stated practices reflect issues raised in the research literature on second language listening?'

Sub-questions were then as follows:

1. What are teachers' stated listening instructional practices?
2. What are teachers' stated beliefs about how listening should be taught and how listening activities should be carried out?

3. How do teachers' stated beliefs compare with their stated practice?

4. What factors if any are related to teachers' stated beliefs and stated practices?

In the sections that follow, we present data to answer these sub-questions before considering our overarching question and interpreting the findings within the study context in the 'Discussion'. The study thus follows the three-way approach (normative, metacognitive and contextual) outlined earlier in this section.

2.1 Participants

In an effort to reach a representative sample of MFL teachers in state secondary schools in England (i.e. teaching learners between the ages of 11 and 14), we firstly obtained a sample from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) who hold a database of all schools in England. A randomly selected stratified sample of 90 state schools in England was used, selected on the basis of achievement (percentage of learners gaining five or more good passes in the GCSE, the examination taken at age 16 in England), socioeconomic status of learners (percentage of learners eligible to obtain Free School Meals, a measure of deprivation used in the UK) and government office region. We contacted all 90 schools and invited their MFL departments to participate. Twenty-three schools from a range of locations and make-up were willing to participate, as shown in Table 1.

<Table 1 here>

To further augment the final sample of teachers from which to select participants for the interview and observation phase of our study, we also invited teachers from 32 schools

from the University of X Initial Teacher Education Partnership to respond to the questionnaire. Teachers from 20 of these schools accepted this invitation. Finally, teachers from three other schools who heard about our work and were interested in participating also completed a questionnaire. This gave a total of 46 schools. As this second sample, Sample 2, differed from Sample 1 in that it was largely made up of schools in the top GCSE band and with low percentages of students receiving Free School Meals, in the analysis below we also checked whether there were any significant differences between the responses of local and non-local schools for the questionnaire items considered in this article, which there were not.

Individually, 115 teachers completed and returned a questionnaire, 50 from Sample 1, 65 from Sample 2. In the combined sample, as ascertained through background items in the questionnaire, 90% taught in comprehensive state schools (i.e. schools with a mixed-ability intake), most were non-native speakers of the language they taught (80% for French, 89% for German, and 93% for Spanish). Regarding how much training they had received during their pre-service teacher education, 50% claimed listening had received the same or more attention than other skills, and 50% claimed it had received less. Only 18% had undergone any in-service training in teaching listening. For years of teaching experience, the combined sample was fairly equally distributed, as shown in Table 2.

<Table 2 here>

Sample 2 did not differ significantly from Sample 1 (as ascertained through chi square tests) with respect to the kind of schools they taught in, amount of training in listening received (in-service or pre-service), or for length of teaching experience.

2.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire was developed from our reading of the research literature on second language listening and from our observations as teacher educators of how teaching is commonly taught in secondary schools in England. The key issues from that literature (as outlined above) and from those observations formed the basis of questionnaire items (see Appendix A – NB we do not report on all questionnaire items for reasons of space). At the start the questionnaire sought open-ended responses regarding the three or four most important procedures teachers claimed they usually followed when they asked learners to listen to a recording in the classroom at Key Stage 3, and to then explain briefly why they followed them. They were told they did not need to rank the procedures in any way. The aim of this item was to gain insights into what teachers most typically claimed to do and their justification for them, prior to us asking more specific questions about their beliefs. Phipps and Borg (2009) argue that the ways in which beliefs are elicited influences the kind of beliefs that emerge, so that "beliefs elicited through questionnaires may reflect teachers' theoretical or idealistic beliefs – beliefs about what should be – and may be informed by technical or propositional knowledge. In contrast, beliefs elicited through the discussion of actual classroom practices may be more rooted in reality – beliefs about what is – and reflect teachers' practical or experiential knowledge" (p. 382). By having this initial open-ended question we hoped to tap into "beliefs about what is" before gaining information on

"beliefs about what should be", even though, as we acknowledge above, any self-report instrument can only provide information about teachers' *stated* or professed beliefs and practices, rather than what these might be in reality. In addition, by asking respondents to name the 'most important' procedures they followed and why, we aimed to gain insights into what they felt were key features of work on listening, i.e. into their conceptualisations of effective listening pedagogy, even if we could not be totally sure that their stated practices were their actual practices.

The next section asked teachers about what they did or asked learners to do before, during and after listening. Here, the aim was to gain insights into teachers' emphasis on prediction-based activities and provision of key vocabulary before listening, as well as how often and in what form post-listening discussion and feedback occurred. The next set of items then probed certain beliefs about listening, using a Likert-type scale, including those related to learners' difficulties, bottom-up and top-down strategies, the teachability of listening, and post-listening activities. Finally the questionnaire asked how often teachers engaged in certain listening activities, how often they used listening activities in textbooks and their opinions about their value. Responses to these last two issues are discussed in detail elsewhere, although it is worth noting here that 85% of respondents said they used textbook materials for listening 'always' or 'most of the time'. Teachers were also asked their views on what is the main purpose of doing listening activities with learners in class.

The questionnaire was piloted with three teachers with a range of length of teaching experience but who had all taught MFL at Key Stage 3 in England. They were asked to

comment on the clarity of items. Minor suggestions for amendments to the wording were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

An information sheet outlining the purpose of the questionnaire and what would happen with the data accompanied it, assuring full anonymity in reporting and the right to withdraw from the study. Ethical approval for the project was granted by the University of X Research Ethics Committee.

2.3 Data collection and analysis.

Schools were contacted by e-mail and invited to take part in the survey. Those who responded positively were posted the number of hard copies of the questionnaire the MFL department had requested.

Quantitative data from all received questionnaires were entered into SPSS 18.0. As the data were largely ordinal or categorical, non-parametric statistics were applied. Descriptive statistics were calculated (simple frequencies, percentages, medians and modes) and Kruskal-Wallis/Mann-Whitney-U tests conducted to explore response differences among different categories of teachers.

Data from open-ended items relating to what teachers reported doing when they gave a listening task in class, and their justification for these actions, were transcribed into an Excel file. These were then read several times by the two authors, who independently drew up categories that arose from the data, without the application of any predefined categories.

After comparing and further refining these categories, 16 for 'procedures' and 15 for 'justifications' were agreed. Each author then coded each procedure and its justification independently using these categories. All procedures were coded together, i.e. we did not separate out those mentioned in first, second position, etc., in respondents' answers, and this was also true for justifications. These codings were compared and an interrater reliability figure calculated of 80%. Any items where coders disagreed were discussed until agreement on all items was reached. The number of responses falling into each category was then calculated. Appendix B gives examples of procedures and justifications and how they were coded.

In order to gain another perspective on procedures and justifications, one that gave a more holistic view of what participants claimed to believe and implement in the classroom, a second analysis of the open-ended items was then conducted, giving each respondent a score regarding the extent to which their outlined procedures and justifications taken together indicated that their approach to listening was focused more on 'process' or on 'product'. For that, the coding approach used by Stipek, Givvin, Salmon and MacGyvers (2001) in their study of the beliefs and practices of teachers of mathematics was followed. This involved drawing up a five-point scale from 1 (very process-focused) to 5 (very product-focused) and giving a score for each respondent's procedures and justifications as a whole. Again, this scale (given in Appendix C) is based on our reading of the research literature on listening pedagogy, but also on the categories that emerged from the data during the initial analysis. Appendix C also shows examples of data coded using this holistic approach.

Each author coded all responses blind before comparing; 97% of scores given were identical or within one point of a match (following the interrater reliability criterion used in Stipek et al, 2001). Differences were then discussed until a final score was agreed on for each respondent.

3. Results

We structure our findings around our four sub-questions and consider them in relation to five key issues arising from the literature on second language listening identified earlier, summarised as:

1. The teachability of effective listening/the need to teach listening as a specific skill
2. The importance of both top-down and bottom-up strategies for comprehension
3. The importance of metacognitive strategies/metacognitive awareness; benefits of learner exploration and discussion of listening
4. Use of prediction and pre-listening activities
5. Focus on global/local details/chunks/individual words

3.1 Teachers' stated listening instructional practices

Stated practices were firstly examined by means of the procedures participants outlined as being the most important ones to follow. Table 3 shows the main categories of procedures teachers considered to be important, and in the order of those most frequently mentioned. While we did not ask them to rank these, either in terms of importance or which they claimed to do first, in the table we indicate how many respondents wrote the procedure in which cell of the table, thereby giving some sense of the order in which they may have

carried them out (NB some teachers mentioned the same category of procedure more than once).

<Table 3 here>

Although the way the question was worded, asking teachers to list 'PROCEDURES (What you do and/or what students do)', may have directed respondents to emphasise the more 'procedural' aspects of carrying out a listening activity with learners, the emphasis on correct 'task[1] completion' rather than 'teaching how to listen' in their comments was still noticeable. Items in the 'Clarify task demands' category ranged from giving instructions relating to the 'procedures' of the task, such as 'Tell pupils how to record answers', 'Make sure they understand the task (filling in boxes/identifying etc)', to those where there was more of an element of advice as to how to best approach the activity, or arguably a more 'strategic' element. Of the 142 procedures coded as 'Clarify task demands', however, only 19 could be thus described, covering general advice about how to take notes, to remain calm in the face of difficult language, to listen out for various types of language (e.g. negatives) in order to understand better.

Even in these examples, however, where teachers do seem to be claiming that they attempt to advise learners how best to listen, there is little sense of them reporting any actual 'teaching' of the suggested approach. In another category, coded 'Talk about listening', respondents indicated more strongly that they did share with learners ideas for how to listen, but as Table 3 shows, only six statements were thus coded. In addition, the term 'strategy' was used infrequently by respondents (used six times, by five respondents).

Overall, clarifying task demands was mainly concerned with ensuring learners knew the format of the task at hand and how it should be completed on a procedural level, as in these examples: 'Explain question: what are they listening for'; 'Ensure task is clear'. The category 'Deal with task mechanics' also focused on this procedural aspect of task completion, but on a more concrete level, as in this example: 'Get pupils to set up layout of exercise (table, numbers)'. It is noteworthy that this procedural emphasis is even evident by the third or fourth procedure, by which point one might expect more emphasis on other aspects of 'teaching' listening.

Thus teachers tend to report concentrating on successful 'doing' or 'completion' of listening tasks. With regard to the theme in the research literature of **'the teachability of effective listening/the need to teach listening as a specific skill'**, this theme seems to be reflected in teachers' stated practices only if 'effective listening' is conceived of as 'effective completion of listening tasks'. In addition, respondents mentioned focussing learners on 'key words' far more often than they referred to focusing learners on the overall meaning or gist on the passage, indicating perhaps that 'effective listening' is also articulated in practice as the ability to identify discrete details and individual items of vocabulary. Hence the emphasis in the literature on the importance of learners being able to work with our fourth area of interest, **global details and chunks rather than just with local details and individual words** found little resonance in respondents' answers.

Regarding the **use of prediction and pre-listening activities**, Table 3 shows that a sizeable number of respondents referred to pre-teaching or revising key vocabulary before the

listening passage. There was also a fairly frequent reference to asking learners to predict vocabulary that might be heard, or, less frequently, to predicting possible answers. Indeed, most procedures related to the pre- or during listening phase. The only post-listening categories were 'Provide feedback/check' and 'Get learners to reuse language from the task'. Within the first of these categories, the post-listening procedures mentioned consisted mainly of checking answers, with only two respondents claiming to give any feedback or prompt discussion on how the task was completed and advice for the future: 'At the end I nearly always ask why was that task easy or difficult and why and how we could have tackled it more effectively'; 'Correct/share feedback and strategies'. Rather the more common type of feedback teachers claimed they gave was as follows: 'Go over it at the end'; 'Feedback of answers, elicit from pupils usually'; 'Mark the exam [sic] giving a numerical mark+ NC [National Curriculum] level', indicating an emphasis on 'the right answer' and a focus on recording marks for reporting purposes. Thus stated practices did not indicate that teachers recognised **the importance of metacognitive strategies/metacognitive awareness; benefits of learner exploration and discussion of listening**.

Respondents' emphasis on **pre-listening procedures**, and relatively little on post-listening feedback (and thus relating to **metacognitive strategies/metacognitive development, and learner exploration, discussion of listening**), was confirmed by responses to later items in the questionnaire (Question 5), where we asked about pre-teaching vocabulary, predicting vocabulary and/or ideas, and about discussion of how learners felt about the task and any advice given as to how to approach future tasks. We were also interested in 'while listening' activities, but for reasons of space, the only two areas discussed here concern verification of

predictions and focusing on key words. Responses are summarised in Table 4, ordered by the percentage of respondents saying they carried out the activity 'frequently' or 'sometimes'. Asking learners to predict vocabulary that might be heard is reported less frequently than reminding them of associated vocabulary (confirming the relative frequency in the Procedures section of the questionnaire), and predicting content/ideas still less often. Verification of predictions is mentioned fairly infrequently. The focus of teachers on learners' understanding specific details of a passage rather than its overall meaning is underlined by the 79% of respondents who said they 'always' or 'frequently' ask learners to focus on key words. The lack of emphasis on post-lesson discussion, seen in the open-ended responses, is also borne out here, with feedback on 'answers' reportedly much more common than feedback on how the task was completed and advice for the future.

<Table 4 here>

3.1.1 Stated activities carried out in class

For further insights into respondents' stated practices, we also asked teachers whether they used certain specific listening activities with learners (Question 8). These were selected on the basis that, on the one hand, they feature in key ELT-based books on how to teach listening (e.g. Field, 2008); or, on the other hand, they are activities which our own observation of listening practices tell us are frequently used in Key Stage 3 classes in England. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they carried out these activities with all year groups of learners at Key Stage 3, with some year groups only, or never. For our analysis, the first two categories have been collapsed so that we have 'Yes ' and 'No' as two distinct categories in Table 5:

<Table 5 here>

Here, there seems again to be a heavy emphasis on listening out for key words and for specific details. Areas that received less attention (i.e. below 50% of respondents) are grouped around what might be described as bottom-up activities, those that focus on specific aspects of words (verb endings), how individual words combine together in connected speech (word boundaries, how words change in connected speech, groups of words). Another category given less attention involves more 'metacognitive' activities asking learners to reflect on their listening. Overall, it could be argued that the activities that might teach learners about some key features of speech and how to comprehend it were relatively neglected, based on what teachers report of their practices, again suggesting that teachers rarely taught learners how to 'listen more effectively' in a way that reflects the approaches suggested by the research literature.

3.2 Teachers' stated beliefs about how listening should be taught and how listening activities should be carried out

An important area of focus for the questionnaire was to explore respondents' beliefs relating to (1) **'the teachability of effective listening/the need to teach listening as a skill'.** This was achieved first of all through two items. One asked them to indicate what the main reason was for carrying out listening activities in class, by ranking five possible potential reasons (and with the opportunity to add one of their own). Table 6 shows the mean rank given to the five reasons, from most to least important. We were somewhat surprised to find that respondents felt that the main purpose of conducting listening activities was 'To teach learners how to listen more effectively', given what our previous research (Graham,

Santos, & Vanderplank, 2010) had indicated about the lack of focus by teachers on 'teaching' listening, and, more importantly, what our questionnaire had revealed about respondents' stated listening practices.

<Table 6 here>

Additional reasons were given by a small number of respondents (n=13), and these seemed to fall into two main categories: a larger group, where teachers wished to give learners a 'communicative' experience in listening (e.g. *To prepare them for using TL [target language] for real communication in target country)* , and smaller group of teachers who viewed class listening as more of a preparation for later assessments (e.g. *To prepare for GCSE listening Unit 1).*

The theme of **'the teachability of effective listening/the need to teach listening as a skill'** was also explored through one item within a series of Likert-type items, with responses to all such items summarised in Table 7, listed in order of level of agreement. Noteworthy is the high level of agreement with the statement 'It is possible to teach learners how to listen more effectively', which seems to mirror respondents' stated reasons for carrying out listening activities in class.

<Table 7 here>

This section of the questionnaire also explored issues relating to (2) **'the importance of both top-down and bottom-up strategies**', through items asking about how learners should deal with unknown words and where respondents felt learners encountered key difficulties. Table 7 shows that the use of context (a top-down strategy) received the highest level of support, but the more bottom-up approaches of using co-text and linguistic knowledge also attracted a level of agreement above 3, with respondents less in agreement with the idea that the use of context is more important than careful listening to the language of the passage. In addition, the main cause of learners' difficulties was felt to be a largely bottom-up one, in terms of segmentation difficulties (identifying word boundaries). This last point is remarkable in view of the lack of attention to word boundaries and word changes in connected speech reported by teachers and summarised in Table 5 above. It should be noted however that 25% of teachers gave a relatively neutral response (mid-point '3') about whether this was in fact the main area of difficulty, and indeed, all items except the first one show over 20% of respondents as hesitant about the extent to which they agreed with the given statement. Given the high level of agreement with the statement that the main reason for doing listening in class is to teach learners how to listen more effectively, teachers' lack of certainty about some of the key issues relating to learners' difficulties and how best to resolve them is perhaps surprising.

With regard to (3) '**The importance of metacognitive strategies/metacognitive awareness; learner exploration and discussion of listening'**, the level of agreement regarding the importance of post-listening discussion was notably lower, particularly regarding discussion of how learners went about the task, with fewer than 50% of respondents agreeing at all with the statement 'After listening, students should discuss how they completed the

listening activity' (Table 7). Again, there was a high level of uncertainty, with 41% of respondents choosing the mid-point option.

3.2.1 Justification of practices

Teachers' justifications for their stated practices, outlined at the start of the questionnaire, may also be taken to reflect aspects of their beliefs regarding what is important in the teaching of listening.

As shown in Table 8, the most frequently cited areas of justification overall were that the named procedure was followed to help learners find the answer to the task, to get learners to do what is expected of them (by completing the task, and sometimes in terms of behaviour), to help them find the answers for the task, and to reassure them. Again, referring back to the theme of **the teachability of effective listening/the need to teach listening as a skill,** if teachers' stated belief that the main reason for conducting listening activities in class is to 'teach learners how to listen more effectively', then this may imply that 'listening effectively' means arriving at the 'right answer' to a task and completing that task in the expected way. Therefore we interpret this as a further indicator that teachers largely see 'effective listening' as 'task completion', or that the context in which they are working requires them to focus on task completion.

<Table 8 here>

Justifications for **the use of prediction and pre-listening activities** often highlighted the idea of aiming for very controlled listening with nothing unpredictable: 'So that pupils know exactly what is coming and that it is related to the sentences/structures we have (just) studied'. This element of predictability is also apparent in the following comment, made to

justify pre-teaching or revising vocabulary before the listening activity: 'So that they know what they are listening for as it is all contrived'. This last comment also suggests that the respondent has some awareness that the stated practice may not be the most desirable but that learners and teachers are engaged in some sort of 'display' of listening, perhaps for assessment purposes.

Similarly, a key word focus, and hence perhaps an assessment focus, was detectable when respondents wrote that certain procedures were justified in order to focus learners on specific details and key words, with one respondent (perhaps ironically) writing that s/he reminded learners to take this focus in order 'For them to remember [the] point of listening', i.e. that key word focus is the main goal of class listening activities. With reference to the theme, **Focus on global/local details/chunks/individual words,** this seems to suggest importance attached primarily to local details and to the extraction of information, as one might expect to find in the 'comprehension approach' and which is reflected in the assessment framework for listening in this context**.** Greater emphasis, however, was placed on helping learners to understand the passage as a whole than would be expected from the procedures outlined, where few reported focusing learners on gist/overall meaning. With 22 mentions, developing listening as a skill was also put forward as a justification more often than might have been expected, given the comments above regarding the lack of focus on steps that seemed associated with 'teaching' listening as a skill. The types of procedures that were justified as being aimed at developing listening skills were: stimulating prediction, focusing on key words, clarifying task demands, breaking the task down, focusing on meaning/gist, talking about listening, and providing

feedback/checking answers, with this last type of procedure being the most frequently associated with developing listening skills. As mentioned above, however, there was little evidence of respondents claiming to give the type of feedback that focused on 'how' the task was completed, as opposed to the nature of the answers given.

A simple analysis of frequency of stated practices and their justifications obscures to some extent, however, what individual teachers said they did and believed overall, i.e. what their 'approach' to listening as a whole was. The second level of analysis of the open-ended justifications and procedures item sought to give a more holistic picture of individual teachers' approaches, by allocating them a process or product-oriented score as described earlier. Table 9 shows scores for the sample as a whole, illustrating that, overall, the sample showed a much stronger emphasis on product than on process.

<Table 9 here>

3.3 How teachers' stated beliefs compare with their stated practice

Thus far there is evidence of an apparent mismatch between teachers' stated beliefs in the importance/possibility of teaching learners how to listen more effectively, as measured chiefly by their responses to the items '**What, in your view, is the main purpose of carrying out listening tasks at KS3'** and **'It is possible to teach learners how to listen more effectively'**, and their stated practices. This mismatch can be explained, however, if one considers that for these respondents, 'listening effectively' equates with successful task

completion, obtaining correct answers, and learners broadly doing what is expected of them, in a heavily product-oriented manner.

Clearer insights into how stated beliefs related to stated practice were sought by correlating respondents' process/product scores (Table 9) with responses to the two items concerning beliefs about the teachability of listening and the importance of teaching how to listening effectively given in the previous paragraph. This approach again followed that of Stipek et al (2001) in their analysis of the beliefs and practices of mathematics teachers. In the present study, it was hypothesised that the more teachers agreed with the above statements about 'teachability' and 'how to listen more effectively', the more their overall process/product score would reflect an emphasis on process. No significant correlation was found, however, either between scores for the teachability of listening ($p = .961$, Spearman's rho) or for the importance of teaching how to listen effectively ($p = .527$), suggesting again a divergence between teachers' stated beliefs and stated practices.

3.4 What factors if any are related to teachers' stated beliefs and stated practices?

Responses were analysed (Kruskal-Wallis) to discover whether there were any differences in participants' stated beliefs or stated practices based on the following factors: length of teaching experience, University of X or national sample, amount of instruction on listening in initial teacher education. Potentially, teachers who had more recently completed initial teacher education might exhibit stated beliefs/stated practices more in line with what the research literature suggests regarding listening than more experienced teachers, who might

be more influenced by curriculum and contextual demands. Those receiving more input on listening in their training might similarly be expected to have more 'theoretical' knowledge. As explained earlier, we also wanted to ascertain whether local teachers differed in their responses from the national sample. A small number of stated beliefs and stated practices were selected for analysis. The following were taken as key indicators of stated beliefs and stated practices relating to a process approach to listening: overall process/product score, level of agreement with these statements: 'It is possible to teach learners how to listen more effectively'; 'After listening, students should discuss how they completed the listening activity' ;'After listening, I ask learners what they did to complete the task' and 'After listening, I advise learners how to deal with difficulties next time'. Surprisingly, no significant differences were found for any factor in relation to any of these areas, suggesting considerable uniformity in teachers' stated beliefs and stated practices.

4. Discussion

Here we return to our over-arching research question, 'To what extent do teachers' stated beliefs and stated practices reflect issues raised in the research literature on second language listening?'

Our findings for our sub-questions suggest that while teachers did seem to share the view of the research literature that effective listening is teachable (and saw the development of effective listening as the main reason for carrying out listening activities), they infrequently reported using approaches and activities that the literature suggests will lead to effective listening skill development. 'Listen effectively' also seemed to be conceptualised by respondents as 'effective task completion', the identification of discrete items/pieces of

information, rather than more global understanding and the ability to deal with any unpredictable elements. Hence there was evidence, in the English context at least, to support Field's (2008) claim that the 'comprehension approach' dominates listening classrooms (but see also below). It also confirms Goh's (2008) claim, commenting on language teachers globally, that the "intended outcome of listening lessons, however, is typically the achievement of successful comprehension. With a focus on the product of listening, every activity becomes a test of the learners' listening ability" (p.191).

This focus on 'doing listening' at the expense of 'teaching listening' is most clearly evidenced in respondents' stated practices in the 'Procedures' section of the questionnaire, with the heavy emphasis on 'clarifying task demands' rather than on other procedures more conducive to listening development. Likewise justifications that revolve around 'finding the answer' and 'getting pupils to do what is expected' indicate that the principles underpinning teachers' practices are based more on curriculum, assessment and classroom management requirements than on recommendations found in the research literature. This is also seen in the striking lack of emphasis on post-listening discussion and steps to develop metacognitive awareness in learners in respondents' reported practices.

While teachers reported using pre-listening activities fairly frequently, those reported activities reside at the level of individual lexis rather than in terms of predicting content. Moreover, there was little mention of teachers encouraging learners to verify their predictions. The importance of the latter is underlined by Vandergrift in a number of publications (e.g. Vandergrift, 1999, 2002, 2003). The way in which teachers use prediction

activities, without emphasising the need for subsequent verification, may explain why intermediate learners in England (i.e. learners of 16-17 years of age in Year 12, and therefore more advanced than the learners our survey addressed) frequently fail to verify predictions made, and tend to unhelpfully focus on predicting individual items of lexis (Graham et al., 2010). Indeed, some of the respondents' justifications for the use of prediction activities, to make sure learners encountered 'no surprises', or to reassure them, suggests that teachers were using such activities more to ensure that learners 'found the answer', rather than to teach them how to use their prior knowledge effectively. In other words, the emphasis is on the 'here and now' and not on developing skills for the future.

In their survey of teachers' views about grammar teaching, Borg and Burns (2008) found that respondents rarely referred to theory or methodological principles to explain their views, and that their "sources of evidence cited were overwhelmingly practical and experiential in nature" (p. 478). Although we, unlike Borg and Burns (2008), did not explicitly ask teachers what the sources of their views were, by asking them to justify their procedures for listening activities we were giving them the opportunity to state implicitly the basis for their actions. As with Borg and Burns' sample, our teachers did not seem to have any research or theory-based rationales for their practices. Arguably one might not expect such rationales, although there is conflicting evidence regarding the extent to which teachers refer to research-based knowledge in relation to their practice (Ratcliffe et al, 2004; Rickinson, 2005). Certainly in several ELT studies teachers do make such reference (e.g. Andon & Eckerth, 2009; Baker, 2011; Borg, 2007). Nevertheless, Breen et al (2001) caution against imposing on teachers "the 'accepted wisdom' of language teaching

methodology" (p. 472) from such sources as academics, but it was not clear to us that our respondents were voicing strongly held convictions that their approach was the right one. That a large percentage of mid-point responses were given to several Likert-type items indicates that many teachers were uncertain about the most 'effective' ways to help learners, and several listening procedures were given no justification by respondents. Indeed, in the interviews that were conducted later with a small sample of teachers (Graham & Santos, in preparation), some expressed dissatisfaction with the approach to listening that they took in their classrooms but claimed that they lacked the time or expertise to find an alternative way of working.

Another striking feature of our findings was the lack of difference across teachers in their stated beliefs and stated practices in terms of length of teaching experience and amount of listening in respondents' initial teacher education, especially considering the range of schools involved. Breen et al (2001) found diversity in how certain pedagogical principles were put into practice by teachers, but from the sample we have the picture is one of greater uniformity. Given that most respondents (82%) said they had had no in-service training in the teaching of listening, and that the amount of attention devoted to the skill in initial teacher education programmes was at best the same as other skills (50% of responses) and at worst, less (50% of responses) the question arises, what is the source of teachers' stated principles and stated practices for listening? Pre-service training seems unlikely to be the source, since newly qualified teachers held views very similar to their more experienced colleagues, and also because any such training seems to have been scant. Siegel (2013), demonstrating a heavy reliance on comprehension questions in a university context in Japan, argues that perhaps teachers fall back on such an approach because, more

than in other areas of language teaching, they lack knowledge of alternative methods. This may also be true of our sample. An alternative source of input, however, may be the textbook activities that 85% of our respondents claimed to use for listening work 'always' or 'most of the time'; an analysis of commonly-used textbooks suggests that these have almost no focus on listening development, emphasising instead National Curriculum levels and comprehension activities (Graham, Santos, & Francis-Brophy, 2011). Kauffman (2005) comments on the powerful role played by textbooks in contexts with a very prescribed curriculum, with textbooks presenting activities whose main aim is to help teachers to deliver the assessment framework in question. The assessment framework within which our respondents were working requires them to show that learners can meet a fairly narrow range of competences i.e. understanding of "main points and opinions (…) identify and note the main points and specific details", while the more complex skills outlined in the Programme of Study, namely to "use previous knowledge, context and other clues to work out the meaning of what they hear or read (…) deal with unfamiliar language, unexpected responses and unpredictable situations" (QCA, 2007) go unassessed. The 'right answer' approach seems to be much more aligned to the assessed objectives than to the unassessed ones, suggesting that contextual demands play an important role in shaping the stated beliefs and stated practices of teachers in England, as may well be the case elsewhere, to judge by authors such as Goh (2010) writing in the context of Asia.

At the beginning of this paper one of our stated aims was to uncover to what extent language teachers indeed report following Field's (2008) comprehension approach. While above we comment that our findings do seem to indicate that this is an important part of teachers' stated practice, we argue for a more nuanced label for the pedagogical approach

we have uncovered, that goes beyond an emphasis on mere comprehension, but which also involves institutional and contextual control, the following of almost ritualised procedures to ensure predictability, maximum correct answers and to shield learners from any challenge or uncertainty. It is problematic to come up with a label that covers all aspects of this approach, but we propose a tentative one entitled 'the performative-instrumental-dependency approach'. In this, and echoing Pollard et al (2000, p.290, in Jeffrey, 2002, p.6), "both teachers and children focus predominantly on assessment outcomes", and challenge is removed in order to maximise such outcomes. Performativity in the context of schooling in England as a whole has been written about at length (e.g. Ball, 2003), but to a lesser extent in the area of languages (see Mitchell, 2010, for an exception), and, to our knowledge, not at all in relation to the teaching of listening in particular. The difficulties learners in England experience in listening may, furthermore, be attributable to this 'performative-instrumental-dependency' approach, which rather than boosting their confidence through the reaching of attainment targets, may achieve the exact opposite: by depriving them of what Bandura (1995) calls 'mastery experiences' (p.3) in which learners' self-efficacy is developed in the accomplishment of challenging tasks through persistence and problem-solving or strategic working.

5. Conclusion

This paper has provided a wide-ranging account of the stated beliefs and stated practices of language teachers in England in relation to the teaching of listening. In so doing, it addresses an important gap in the international literature on language teacher cognition and adds to our understanding of the complex relationship between beliefs, stated practices and

contextual factors. It provides evidence, previously lacking, of the existence of an approach to the teaching of listening that focuses on comprehension (Field, 2008), but goes further to highlight how issues of performativity and dependency may underlie this focus at the expense of developing learners' listening ability. The extent to which performativity concerns are discernible in the stated beliefs and stated practices of teachers in other curriculum areas, and whether these overshadow any influence from an understanding of the research literature in the field as they seem to do in our sample, is worthy of exploration. Helping teachers move beyond such performativity concerns seems an essential aim for future professional development work among teachers of all subjects, across a range of contexts. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of acknowledging the force of such concerns in teacher development work, perhaps especially when the aim is to introduce teachers to more research-based teaching principles. The further challenge in such work is to find ways of showing how such principles can be implemented in real classroom contexts, where teachers are faced with similar contextual imperatives. It is often rightly argued that for research to influence teachers' practice, the principles presented need to have "resonated" with their practice (Ratcliffe et al, 2004,p. iv). Developing understanding of these principles is however an important first step, which in itself can help teachers, in the words of Borg (2010) "make deeper sense of their work" and find "new ways of seeing" (p. 414), an important precursor to any change in practices.

Note 1: 'Task' here is understood in the sense of a textbook or similar activity, not in the sense of Task-Based Language Teaching. A key characteristic of the latter is that learners

complete tasks with a real-life, communicative purpose; this is rarely the case with textbook listening tasks, which tend to focus on comprehension and extraction of key information, with little communicative purpose.

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Tables

Table 1 Demographic profile of schools for Sample 1

Free School Meals band [1]	**Number of schools**
Low (Bands 1-2)	12
High (Bands 4-5)	7
Average (Band 3)	4
GCSE results [2]	**Number of schools**
Low (Bands 1-2)	12
High (Bands 4-5)	7
Average (Band 3)	4
Region	**Number of schools**
London, South East, South West	12
Midlands, East of England	6
North of England	6
Free School Meals band*	**Number of schools**
Low (Bands 1-2)	12

1.Free School Meals data is used as an indication of relative levels of deprivation in schools within the UK

2. GCSE is the examination taken at 16 in England and is often used as an indication of levels of attainment in schools in that context

Table 2 Years' teaching experience of all respondents

Years of experience	n	Valid %
0-3 years	24	21
4-8 years	25	22
9-15 years	36	32
Over 16 years	29	25
Missing	1	1

Table 3 Categories of listening procedures reported by respondents

Category	Number of times procedure mentioned in each cell				
	Procedure 1	**Procedure 2**	**Procedure 3**	**Procedure 4**	**Total**
Clarify task demands	46	49	28	19	142
Break down task	5	12	27	12	56
Pre-teach/revise vocabulary	18	12	2	2	34
Focus learners on key words	13	14	4	4	35
Provide feedback/check answers	0	2	8	20	30
Stimulate prediction	8	13	3	2	26
Deal with task mechanics	4	9	6	7	26
Focus learners' attention	8	4	4	1	17
Focus learners on gist/overall meaning	3	5	6	1	15
Stimulate different tasks for different learners	0	2	2	4	8
Talk about listening	1	1	2	2	6
Carry out teacher preparation	2	1	0	1	4
Focus learners on the context	2	0	0	0	2
Get learners to reuse language from the task	0	0	0	2	2
Combine reading and listening	1	0	0	0	1
Combine listening and speaking	1	0	0	0	1

Table 4 Respondents' stated practices pre-, during and post-listening (valid percentages)

Statement	Response			
	Never	**Sometimes**	**Frequently**	**Always**
Before listening				
I remind learners of vocabulary linked to the topic	3	20	43	35
I ask learners to predict vocabulary they might hear (e.g. verbs, nouns)	11	42	36	12
I ask learners to think of ideas/facts etc. that might be discussed in the passage	15	45	29	11
I give pupils vocabulary items that will be used in the passage	5	58	28	9
I ask learners to discuss possible answers to the question	25	55	18	2
During listening				
I ask pupils to focus on key words	0	21	41	38
I ask pupils to verify their predictions	23	49	23	6
After listening				
I ask learners what answers they put (e.g. Picture A, Picture B etc.)	0	12	50	37
I ask learners how they felt about the task	10	39	33	18
I advise learners how to deal with difficulties next time	7	43	43	7
I ask learners to answer using target language words/phrases (e.g. 'He went to the cinema' (in TL)[*target language*])	4	47	45	4
I ask learners to use language/structures used in the passage in a productive follow-up task	8	47	42	4
I tell learners what the answers are (e.g. Picture A, Picture B etc.)	32	42	13	13
I ask learners what they did to complete the	25	55	19	2

task

Table 5 Stated listening activities carried out in class by respondents, in order of frequency (N=115)

I ask learners to:	**Yes, I do this**		**No, I never do this**	
	Frequency	**Valid percent**	**Frequency**	**Valid percent**
Listen out for key words	115	100	0	0
Listen out for specific details	113	99	1	1
Listen out for the gist of the passage	112	98	2	2
Complete gap-fills	110	96	5	4
Follow a transcription while listening	105	92	9	8
Think about how to work out/deal with the meaning of unknown words	102	90	11	10
Listen to a text read out by me	98	88	14	13
Listen out for words they predict they may hear	92	81	21	19
Match what is heard to a written paraphrase	78	71	32	29
Identify tone of voice/emotion	77	69	34	31
Listen out for marker phrases	76	69	34	31
Make sound-spelling links	75	69	33	31
Distinguish one speaker from another	68	62	41	38
Listen out for/distinguish between individual sounds	65	58	47	42
Focus on intonation patterns	63	58	46	42
Recognise/listen out for words from different word classes (e.g. verbs, adjectives)	54	48	58	52
Listen for verb endings	53	49	56	51
Recognise groups of words that occur together	47	44	59	56
Listen out for how individual words change in connected speech	47	42	64	58
Identify word boundaries	44	42	61	58
Listen cooperatively (in pairs)	39	35	74	66
Transcribe (i.e. write down in the TL [*target language*] everything they hear)	37	33	74	67
Use peer-designed listening activities	25	22	88	78

Keep a listening log about how they feel about listening	9	8	104	92
Keep a listening log about how they approach listening tasks (i.e. what they do)	4	4	107	97

Table 6 Stated purpose of carrying out listening activities in class

Purpose	Mean rank
To teach learners how to listen more effectively	2.1
To increase learners' opportunities to practise listening	2.3
To provide learners with a model of pronunciation	3.1
To assess how well learners can listen	3.5

Table 7 Stated beliefs about listening, frequencies and valid percentages (in brackets)

Statement	Response Scale [1]					
N=115						
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Mode**
It is possible to teach learners how to listen more effectively	69 (61)	38 (33)	4 (4)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1
When learners don't understand a word they should work out its meaning from the context	31 (27)	57 (50)	25 (22)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2
When learners don't understand a word they should work out its meaning from the word/phrases that precede or follow the unknown word	19 (17)	61 (54)	33 (29)	1 (1)	0 (0)	2
When learners don't understand a word they should work out its meaning from their linguistic knowledge (e.g. a knowledge of L2/L1 [*first/second language*] vocabulary, grammar)	19 (17)	50 (44)	38 (33)	7 (6)	0 (0)	2
Learners' main problems lie in the difficulty they have in identifying where word/phrase/sentence boundaries are	19 (17)	47 (41)	29 (25)	17 (15)	2 (2)	2
After listening, students should discuss how they felt about the listening activity.	15 (13)	42 (38)	32 (29)	18 (16)	5 (5)	2
After listening, students should discuss how they completed the listening activity.	11 (10)	41 (36)	47 (41)	15 (13)	1 (1)	3
The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from their lack of vocabulary	16 (14)	30 (26)	38 (33)	28 (25)	2 (2)	3
It's more important for learners to use the context of the passage to understand than to listen carefully to what is actually said	9 (8)	33 (30)	39 (35)	25 (22)	6 (6)	3
The main difficulties for learners in listening arise	3	23	38	42	8	4

from lack of grammatical knowledge	(3)	(21)	(33)	(37)	(7)	
The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from lack of background knowledge about the topic of the passage	0 (0)	13 (11)	33 (29)	59 (51)	10 (9)	4

Note. 1 = *agree strongly*; 5 = *disagree strongly.*

Table 8 Categories for justifications for stated practices reported by respondents

Category	**Number of times justification mentioned in each cell**				
	Justification 1	Justification 2	Justification 3	Justification 4	Total
Getting learners to do what is expected	30	25	14	10	79
Helping learners find the answer	19	14	19	10	62
Giving reassurance	12	14	13	6	45
Focussing learners on key information	15	16	7	4	42
Helping learners understand the passage	9	14	13	3	39
Allowing mental preparation	16	5	3	0	24
Developing listening skills	1	4	6	10	21
Assessing performance	0	1	3	8	12
Providing differentiation/support/extension	1	7	5	0	13
Preparing learners for tests	0	3	5	4	12
For the collective benefit of the class	5	1	2	1	9
Developing language knowledge	1	2	2	4	9
To develop a routine	1	1	0	0	2
To give a purpose to listening	1	0	0	1	2
To give exposure to varied input	1	1	0	0	2

Table 9: Process/product scores

	n	Valid %
Very strong focus on process	0	0
Strong focus on process	5	4
Some process, some product focus	14	12
Strong focus on product	50	44
Very strong focus on product	39	34
Missing	4	3

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE. NB. Not all items are reported on in this paper and the section asking for respondents' background information is not reproduced here**.**

In all of the following questions, we are interested in how you teach listening at KS3. Please base your answers on how you teach pupils in that key stage. There are no right or wrong answers!

1. **In the table below, please list the MOST IMPORTANT procedures (3 or 4) that you usually follow when you ask learners to listen to a recording in the classroom at KS3. (NB there is no need to rank the procedures in any way).**

PROCEDURES (What you do and/or what students do)	JUSTIFICATION (Why do you do this? Why is this done?)

2. How often do you work on listening in class at KS3, on average? Please tick one option.

Less than once a week ___
Once a week ___
Two or three times a week ___
More than three times a week ___

3. In your opinion how does <u>listening at KS3</u> compare with the teaching of other skills in terms of <u>difficulty</u>? Number the options below to answer this question (1=the least difficult; 4 = the most difficult)

Listening ___ Speaking ___ Reading ___ Writing ___

4. In your teaching at KS3, how much emphasis do you place on the following skills? Number the options below to answer this question (1=the least emphasis; 4 = the most emphasis)

Listening ___ Speaking ___ Reading ___ Writing ___

5. When you ask learners to listen at KS3, how often do you do the following?

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Before listening, I remind learners of vocabulary linked to the topic				
Before listening, I give pupils vocabulary items that will be used in the passage				
Before listening, I ask learners to predict vocabulary they might hear (e.g. verbs, nouns)				
Before listening, I ask learner to think of ideas/facts etc that might be discussed in the passage				
Before listening, I ask pupils to discuss possible answers to the questions				

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
While listening, I ask pupils to verify their predictions				
While listening, I ask pupils to focus on key words				
During the listening, I pause the tape/CD when the passage is played for the first time				
During the listening, I pause the tape/CD only when the passage is played for a 2nd time				
When I pause the tape/CD, I try to pause it at the end of each speaker				
When I pause the tape/CD, I try to pause it at the end of each question				
When I pause the tape/CD, I try to pause it at the end of natural speech boundaries				

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
After listening, I tell learners what the answers are (e.g. *Picture A, Picture B*, etc.)				
After listening, I ask learners what answers they put (e.g. *Picture A, Picture B,* etc.)				
After listening, I ask learners to answer using target language words/phrases (e.g. *'He went to the cinema'* (in TL) [*target language*]				
After listening, I ask learners how they felt about the task				
After listening, I ask learners what they did to complete the task				
After listening, I advise learners how to deal with difficulties next time				
After listening, I ask learners to use language/structures used in the passage in a productive follow-up task				

6. **How far do you agree with the following statements for KS3 learners for LISTENING? Please circle <u>one</u> number below to show your level of agreement (1 = Agree Strongly; 5 = Disagree Strongly).**

i) When learners don't understand a word they should work out its meaning from the context.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
ii) When learners don't understand a word they should work out its meaning from the words/phrases that precede or follow the unknown word.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
iii) When learners don't understand a word they should work out its meaning from their linguistic knowledge (e.g. knowledge of L2/L1 [*first/second language*] vocab, grammar).	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
iv) It's more important for learners to use the context of the passage to understand than to listen carefully to what is actually said.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
v) The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from their lack of vocabulary.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
vi) Learners' main problems lie in the difficulty they have in identifying where word/phrase/sentence boundaries are.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
vii) The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from lack of grammatical knowledge	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
viii) The main difficulties for learners in listening arise from lack of background knowledge about the topic of the passage.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
ix) After listening, students should discuss how they completed the listening activity.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
x) After listening, students should discuss how they felt about the listening activity.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
xi) I introduce new vocabulary to learners orally as individual items.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
xii) I introduce new vocabulary to learners orally in connected speech.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
xiii) It is possible to teach learners how to listen more effectively.	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5
ix) Listening should be taught differently depending on whether learners are in their first or	Agree strongly				Disagree strongly
	1	2	3	4	5

subsequent years of learning.	

7. What, in your view, is the main purpose of carrying out listening tasks at KS3? Please rank the following in order of importance, with 1 for the most important reason, 5 the least important.

To extend learners' vocabulary ___
To increase learners' opportunities to practise listening ___
To teach learners how to listen more effectively ___
To assess how well learners can listen ___
To provide learners with a model of pronunciation ___
If you have another reason, please write it here_____

8. Which of these listening activities do you use with learners in different years of foreign language learning at KS3? Tick all the boxes that apply.

I ask learners to:	**Yes, in all years of KS3**	**Yes, but only in certain years of KS3 (please specify year)**	**No, I never do this**
Listen out for words they predict they may hear			
Transcribe (i.e. write down in the TL[*target language*]) everything they hear)			
Listen out for specific details			
Listen out for the gist of the passage			
Listen out for key words			
Complete gap-fills			
Match what is heard to a written paraphrase			
Recognise groups of words that occur together			
Listen out for marker phrases, e.g. 'For example', 'First of all' (in the TL[*target language*])			
Listen out for/distinguish between individual sounds			
Recognise/listen out for words from different word classes (e.g. verbs, adjectives)			
Listen for verb endings			
Listen out for how individual words change in connected speech			
Identify tone of voice/emotion			
Distinguish one speaker from another			
Listen to a text read out by me			
Focus on intonation patterns			
Make sound-spelling links			
Follow a transcription while listening			
Think about how to work out/deal with unknown words			
Identify word boundaries			
Listen cooperatively (in pairs)			
Keep a listening log about how they approach listening tasks (i.e. what they do)			
Keep a listening log about how they feel about listening			
Use peer-designed listening activities			

9. How often do you use listening activities from textbooks? Please tick one option:

Always __ Most of the time __ Sometimes __ Rarely ___ Never__

If you have ticked any option other than 'Always', please give details to explain your answer:

10. List 2 positive aspects and 2 negative aspects of listening tasks frequently found in textbooks.

Positive aspects		**Negative aspects**

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX B

Categories used in the coding of open-ended responses.

Procedures for listening

Category	**Definition**	**Example**
Clarify task demands	Explain what has to be done to complete the task, including what sort of answers are required, what sort of language needs to be attended to, where answers need to be recorded	*Ask them to read what sort of detail is required - words /letters/ numbers/etc look at the questions*
Break down task	Simplify the task in some way, e.g. by pausing, rewinding, replaying the recording	*Pause at intervals and replay*
Pre-teach/revise vocabulary	Present learners with, or remind them of, language that will feature in the recording	*Ensure pupils are familiar with the language*
Focus learners on key words	Remind learners to listen out for key items	*I give them words to spot in the listening and they put their hands up when they hear it*
Provide feedback/check answers	After listening, give learners the solution to the task or ask them what answers they put; tell learners how successful they have been in the task	*Feedback of answers elicit from pupils usually*
Stimulate prediction	Ask learners to think of language or themes that might appear in the text	*Go through what pupils are listening for - predict what they should hear*

Deal with task mechanics	Ask learners to carry out practical steps involved in setting up the task	*Logistical prep (copy grid/numbers/prep sheet) from book or word*
Focus learners' attention	Ask learners to listen carefully, to not talk	*Ensure complete silence*
Focus learners on gist/overall meaning	Ask learners to try to get the overall sense of the passage rather than specific details	*Listen to recording without answering*
Stimulate different tasks for different learners	Ask different learners to complete different activities in relation to the text, ask different learners to listen out for different things	*Encourage those who can to jot down any extra details they've understood*
Talk about listening	Discuss the process of listening	*Look at strategies e.g. look like English - what are the synonyms*
Carry out teacher preparation	Prepare self to deliver listening activity	*I check transcript for unfamiliar vocab*
Focus learners on the context	Ask learners to think about the topic area or setting for the text	*Give background to texts*
Get learners to reuse language from the task	Post-listening, ask learners to use language met in the text in a speaking or writing task	*Follow up in practice/link to following activities*
Combine reading and listening	Listen to and read the text at the same time	*Ask pupils to read transcript (is in textbook) at same time as they hear recording*
Combine listening and speaking	Listen and read aloud or repeat at the same time	*Listen and repeat*

Justifications

Category	Definition	Example
Getting learners to do what is expected	To make sure learners follow expected procedures and meet expected outcomes	*So that students can concentrate on listening and are clear what/how much answer is required of them*
Helping learners find the answer	To aid learners in successfully answering the question or completing the task	*So nothing is missed*
Giving reassurance	To allay learners' worries and to help them not to be anxious	*So that there isn't a panic when the tape starts*
Focussing learners on key information	To make sure learners extract the required details from the text	*To enable pupils to focus on main points*
Helping learners understand the passage	To aid learners in getting an overall sense of what the passage is about	*Helps understand whole passage*
Allowing mental preparation	To help learners get ready mentally for the listening task	*To start their preparation and work out what they may know already and should try and remember*
Developing listening skills	To help learners become better listeners	*To make students aware of the difference in spelling and sound*
Assessing performance	To check how well learners have completed the task	*Ask to get immediate results of task and assess which pupils need more help*
Providing differentiation/support/ex	To challenge or support learners of different levels of competence	*To allow less able to access task*

tension

Preparing learners for tests	To get learners ready to complete listening assessments	*In an exam if they write down what they hear they still would get a mark*
For the collective benefit of the class	To help all learners in the class	*So everyone can hear*
Developing language knowledge	To increase learners' linguistic knowledge	*Develop their vocabulary especially for things they would hear but not see written*
To develop a routine	To get learners used to familiar steps that will be followed in future listening activities	*I believe that it is important to follow the same routine, especially for less able students as they will be able to follow the lesson easier*
To give a purpose to listening	To give the activity a purpose	*Prove that it is purposeful*
To give exposure to varied input	To enable learners to hear different types of oral input	*Access to genuine native speaker*

APPENDIX C

(i) Process-product scale used to score teachers' listening approach.

Process focus	**Product focus**
Gives advice on how to listen well	Gives advice on how to manage task mechanics
Prompts strategy discussion/advice	Outlines task demands
Gives feedback on how task handled	Gives feedback on marks
Makes reference to communication	Makes reference to exams, tests
Refers to pupil autonomy/independence	Refers to teacher control (pausing, eliminating difficulty)

(ii) Application of process-product scale to score teachers' listening approach, using 'procedures' and 'justifications' from two respondents.

1 = very process-focused; 5 = very product-focused

Respond-ent	**Procedure 1**	**Justification 1**	**Procedure 2**	**Justification 2**	**Procedure 3**	**Justification 3**	**Procedure 4**	**Justification 4**	**Score**
1	Announce we shall do a listening comp - examples	Class know to get ready/check prepared - procedures well-drilled. Theoretical questions;	Draw any tables - explain question and answer format - any questions?	What do we have to do? How do we answer?	Ready, silence, begin - fast playing	Listen for gist - key points	Second playing. Check answers.	Check answers/listen for answers missed	**5**

		know what to do; listen not talk							
2	Introduce vocab list if not taught	Students read the new vocab and make a guess before they start	Ask students to read the questions and make some predictions about the answer	Predictions will help students focus on key words and understanding of the context	Listen twice with a thinking time between the listenings	Thinking time is helpful for students to recognise key words and patterns and verify some predictions	Ask pupils' answers and check with them together if necessary play the tape more times	It's better to use the opportunity to find out how they did and felt about the listening and then give answers and advice	**2**